

City of Burien

BURIEN PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

March 13, 2007

7:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

MINUTES

Planning Commission Members Present:

Robert Simpson-Clark, Jim Clingan, Jon Newton, Janet Shull

Absent:

Stacie Grage, Rebecca McInteer, Michael Sumner

Others Present:

David Johanson, senior planner; David Johnson, consultant; Gerry Lindsay, minutes taker

Roll Call

Chair Simpson-Clark called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Upon the call of the roll all commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Grage, McInteer and Sumner.

Agenda Confirmation

Motion to approve the agenda as printed was made by Commissioner Newton. Second was by Commissioner Shull and the motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment – None

Approval of Minutes

A. February 27, 2007

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Newton. Second was by Commissioner Shull and the motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

A. Presentation and Discussion of Downtown Parking Stakeholder Group Recommendation

Senior Planner David Johanson said the Planning Commission and the Business and Economic Development Partnership have been asked to review and discuss the recommendation of the Downtown Parking Study Stakeholder Group. The report was released on March 1.

David Johnson, consultant with Transportation Solutions, Inc., said he was retained by the City to conduct a parking study of the central business district to determine the existing on- and off-street parking supply and the demand for that supply at different time periods. An inventory of the parking supply was conducted, along with all of the land uses in the study area based on county records.

Mr. Johnson said the study determined that there are 1,330,000 square feet of commercial space in the downtown area along with 56 residential units. Those uses are served by approximately 4,000 off-street parking stalls and 680 on-street stalls. The parking supply utilization peaks on weekday afternoons around 3 p.m. by which time approximately 38 percent of the parking supply is occupied. Within certain subareas of the overall study area, however, the utilization rate approaches 70 percent at midday. Even so, the supply significantly exceeds the demand.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Newton, Mr. Johnson explained that a group of interns were tasked with driving every street in the study area to count the number of parking spaces on each curb face. The land uses were determined using King County records and through visual verification.

Mr. Johnson said two forecasts of future conditions were created for the study. The near-term forecast looked at all of the known projects, including Town Square and the projects that are either in the permitting pipeline or which have a high probability of occurring in the next few years. Under that scenario, the total commercial square footage increased slightly, and the number of residential units rose by 600. The parking supply available to non-residents was estimated at 4,500 stalls. It was determined that peak utilization would still occur in the early afternoon of weekdays, and that the rate would jump from 38 percent to 58 percent. In the busier areas, the utilization rate would remain at close to 70 percent. It was assumed that the necessary parking for the new residential uses would be supplied by those uses.

The far-term forecast showed an additional 93,000 square feet of commercial space and 810 more residential units. The forecast was predicated on the existing land uses and the ratio of property value to building value to indicate which parcels will be ripe for redevelopment in the next 10 to 15 years. The far-term forecast assumes the downtown area will become more focused on providing services to downtown residents, and that the downtown area would become more vibrant. Utilization of the parking supply in the evening would go up significantly. The conclusion reached was that the non-residential supply would be utilized at a rate of 46 percent at midday; during the evening hours, some of the areas in and around Town Square would climb to 80 percent utilization. Mr. Johnson explained that utilization rates of 85 percent and above are cause for concern; below that level they are manageable.

Commissioner Newton noted that holidays and paydays can create parking issues. Mr. Johnson allowed that there are some factors used by planners, particularly for retail during the Christmas season. The peak demand between Thanksgiving and Christmas is assumed to be 100 percent; the demand for those same spaces in August can be as low as half of that, while for the rest of the year it will be somewhere in between. There are both annual and weekly fluctuations in parking demand, and in determining parking requirements, it is necessary to choose the appropriate snapshot. Special events do not need to be taken into consideration in planning for parking.

Chair Simpson-Clark pointed out that none of the members of the stakeholders group found any inconsistencies between the findings of the parking study and their own observations.

Mr. Johnson informed the Commissioners that the utilization rates for commercial businesses were found to be less on a per square foot basis than the national statistics suggest. The parking model allocates parking demand per thousand square feet or for each residential unit throughout the day, and for the future conditions forecasts the demand rates were ratcheted up to mirror those of the national averages on the thinking that as the downtown redevelops the types of stores will change and they will be busier, thus generating more demand than they do now.

Chair Simpson-Clark said there are a couple of developments in the downtown where the parking has been engineered and where there is full control over the use of the parking spaces. For those developments, the parking utilization percentages are much closer to the optimum.

Commissioner Shull said she was interested to see in the findings that for both the near-term and long-term forecasts the Old Burien subarea is projected to have some of the lower weekday peak utilization rates. That does not match the current perceptions of the area. Mr. Johnson said the demand for parking in some areas has actually changed since the initial counts were made. Commissioner Shull added that the new brewery in the downtown is creating a large demand for parking, partly because it is new and everyone wants to check it out. Mr. Johnson said as the dynamic of the downtown area changes, including new housing units, there will be fewer people driving and more people walking in Old Burien.

Chair Simpson-Clark said one concern is that where parking lots are full potential customers will simply drive on by. Mr. Johnson pointed out that having a parking problem is actually a good thing; it means the community is dynamic and people want to be there. People do not generally go to a place because there is plenty of parking; they go there because the destination is desirable.

Mr. Johnson said the recommendations included as part of the parking study were presented to the stakeholders group. The recommendations were reviewed and refined by the group, and others were added to the list. The prioritized version of the recommendations is what was presented to the Commission for review, along with implementation strategies.

Mr. Johanson allowed that at the public meeting hosted by the stakeholders group, there were concerns voiced over the forecasts and Town Square. The primary concern was focused on 152nd where there are a lot of businesses that do not have on-site parking and rely on on-street parking. There was a lot of good input on the timing issues, and accessibility was listed as a concern as it relates to imposing parking time limits.

Commissioner Shull suggested that during the construction of Town Square there will be disruptions to the parking supply. Mr. Johanson said the contractors are well aware of how important the parking is along 152nd. They will have to fence off the site to do their work, but they will do all they can to make sure their employees are not the ones taking up the spaces. Weekly meetings between the contractors and the City will be held to address such problems.

Commissioner Shull called attention to page 14 of the stakeholders group report and the recommendation to make City-owned remote lots available to the general public for large businesses, and to page 15 and the recommendation regarding the fee in-lieu program for smaller businesses, and asked if the two are inconsistent. Mr. Johanson said making City-owned lots available is a management tool; it will be more geared toward the near-term for employee

parking. The fee in-lieu recommendation is directed more toward smaller lots where redevelopment will find it very difficult to accommodate both a building and the required parking. The fee in-lieu approach is a tool that is intended to help encourage redevelopment of the downtown. Larger projects are far more able to handle their parking needs.

Chair Simpson-Clark said one thing that is not clear in the recommendations is the need to simplify the requirements for making third-party arrangements for parking. As they are currently written, the regulations are largely unworkable in that they require a permanent recorded solution. The regulations should allow parties to make year-by-year arrangements for shared parking. Mr. Johanson concurred that shared parking will be key to the success of the downtown. While there is an adequate supply when

viewed in total, if individual property owners reserve their parking areas for their own uses, the overall system will not benefit.

Commissioner Shull commented that she has been discouraged by Burien business owners from parking in their lot and shopping at someone else's store. She said that has made her less inclined to shop at the store whose owner scolded her for using their parking. She allowed that business owners have every right to preserve their parking for their customers, but they should understand that such actions tend to drive customers away. Adjacent businesses should be encouraged to work together.

Chair Simpson-Clark said encouraging businesses to work together while assuring equity is something that will be very difficult to do by ordinance. Businesses without adequate parking need options in order to stay in business. On the other hand, businesses that comply with all parking regulations and have excess parking will find it unfair to have to subsidize another business. The City will need to step in with an approach that will require businesses without adequate parking to help in some monetary way. If the City wants a market-driven parking system in the downtown, some consideration will have to be given to allowing property owners with parking lots to go ahead and develop them in order to be completely fair.

Chair Simpson-Clark added that in several areas of Seattle there are no parking requirements at all. Mr. Johnson said there are no parking requirements in the Pike Place Market district. However, in the commercial districts developments must provide parking within 800 feet, which can be leased if not constructed; even in those districts there are no parking requirements for first floor uses. Where the demand for parking is high enough, it can be profitable for a parking manager to construct a parking facility.

Commissioner Clingan said he visited with the manager of Grocery Outlet to discuss the parking situation there around Elliot Bay, the new brewery. He said Grocery Outlet has been surprised at the volume of people using the parking lot and has some concerns. If another business with parking requirements similar to those of the brewery opens, the City should prepare neighboring businesses for what to expect.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Clingan, Mr. Johanson explained that if a business comes in wanting to locate in a downtown building, if the use is the same as what previously existed in the building, no parking requirements are triggered, even though the new use may have a higher need for parking. All new uses must conduct a parking demand study to estimate their parking demand. When Elliot Bay came in, a parking demand study was required, and the conclusion reached was that there was an adequate supply in the immediate vicinity.

Commissioner Clingan asked what the process would have been had the fee in-lieu program been on the books when Elliot Bay came in. Mr. Johanson said the details of the program have yet to be worked out. In theory, however, they would have had to determine how much parking they need, and the fee in-lieu would apply to what they could not supply.

Commissioner Shull commented that the fee in-lieu program could be used to get at the perceived or actual potential inequities, and as such it should be high on the list of implementation strategies.

Chair Simpson-Clark offered that some solutions may need to be viewed as transitional. For instance, if an incoming business could simply lease parking from those who have it available, a short-term need could be met. However, allowing for the redevelopment of those short-term parking lots will over time phase out the short-term solution, and the longer term solution of fees in-lieu will become the method of choice. If Town Square is successful, the redevelopment of some other large lots could happen in fairly short order, and much of the excess parking supply will be removed from the system.

Commissioner Shull said it is a good thing the City is out in front of the parking issue, studying it before it becomes critical. Burien is well positioned to accommodate growth in the downtown.

Chair Simpson-Clark agreed and added that by starting early to focus on the downtown the City has the opportunity to get in front of limiting the number of inappropriate businesses there. The Educational Service District is a good example of a use that made sense when it was built but does not make sense in the type of downtown Burien is envisioning, primarily because of its huge parking requirements.

Mr. Johanson said businesses could get together and form their own parking district. Part of their agreement could include common signage and management arrangements. All of that could be done without the City. Chair Simpson-Clark suggested that absent enforcement of parking regulations, there will be no incentive on the part of businesses to cooperate in sharing parking.

Commissioner Newton asked how the City's enforcement program is progressing. Mr. Johanson said it has been in place for only a few months. While the City does not intend to use fines as a revenue stream, the program should pay its own way, which it appears to be doing. The Catch-22 is that if people use the system properly, the City will not be issuing tickets and the program will no longer pay for itself. Most cities find they must supplement parking management.

Mr. Johanson suggested the commission may want to spend some time focused on prioritizing the implementation strategies included in the stakeholders group report.

New Business – None

Director's Report

Mr. Johanson reminded the commissioners about the joint meeting with the City Council scheduled for April 9 and informed them that there will not be a commission meeting on April 10.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Newton. Second was by Commissioner Clingan and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Simpson-Clark adjourned the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

Approved: _____

Robert Simpson-Clark, chair
Planning Commission

Scott Greenberg, director
Community Development Department